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China's Greater Bay Area opens first international clinical trial centre

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To launch clinical studies on AI-powered scoliosis screening and stem cell therapy for knee osteoarthritis

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK); the People's Government of Nansha District, Guangzhou; and Guangzhou First People's Hospital have signed an agreement to establish the Greater Bay Area Clinical Trial Centre (Guangzhou Nansha), to advance cross-boundary clinical research collaboration and medical innovation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The Centre is expected to strengthen clinical research capabilities and healthcare quality across the region, and accelerate the development and adoption of innovative pharmaceuticals and medical technologies for the benefit of more patients.

CUHK will continue to support national development strategies and the development of the GBA by leveraging its strengths in research, clinical services and education, fostering healthcare innovation and high-quality development, and contributing to the region's emergence as an international hub for medical innovation.

Looking ahead to the 15th Five-Year Plan period, Nansha will advance the "Five-Port Linkage" strategy and develop the "Five Key Highlands", focusing on three key fronts of deepening clinical innovation collaboration, utilising pioneering pilot policies to advance the alignment of healthcare regulations and standards, and facilitating the cross-boundary translation chain of medical innovations.

CUHK will collaborate with Guangzhou First People's Hospital Nansha Hospital to conduct a Phase I clinical trial of allogeneic mesenchymal stem cell (MSC) therapy for knee osteoarthritis. The study will explore the potential of regenerative medicine in treating this common degenerative joint disease among middle-aged and older people.

The Centre's inaugural study will externally validate a CUHK-developed AI algorithm for the screening of adolescent idiopathic scoliosis (AIS) using portable, radiation-free 3D surface topography. The technology enables automated, quantitative assessment of spinal deformities from back surface images, offering a safer and more accessible alternative to conventional X-ray screening.